

EXAMINER'S AMENDMENT

An examiner's amendment to the record appears below. Should the changes and/or additions be unacceptable to applicant, an amendment may be filed as provided by 37 CFR 1.312. To ensure consideration of such an amendment, it MUST be submitted no later than the payment of the issue fee.

Authorization for this examiner's amendment was given in a telephone interview with Philip McCann on April 7, 2009.

Cancel claim 5

Claim 10, line 4 replace "wt.%" with "wt %"

Claim 10, line 7 replace "wt.%" with "wt %"

Claim 10, line 15 replace "about 12 grams" with "about 7.2 grams"

Claim 29, line 24 replace "about 12 grams" with "about 7.2 grams"

Cancel claim 35

Cancel claim 36

Allowable Subject Matter

The following is an examiner's statement of reasons for allowance: Claims 3, 4, 6, 8-10, 14, 15, 17, 29, and 32-34 are allowed.

The present invention is drawn to a coated superabsorbent polymer particulate comprising a superabsorbent polymer particulate comprising (a) from about 55 to about 99.9 wt % of polymerizable unsaturated acid group containing monomers, and from about 0.001 to about 5.0 wt % of internal crosslinking agent, wherein the composition has a degree of neutralization of more than 25 mole %, and (b) from about 0.5 to about 20 wt % of a coating containing salt selected from the group consisting of monovalent salts, divalent salts, trivalent salts and higher salts on the superabsorbent polymer particulate surface, wherein the superabsorbent polymer particulate has a water absorption property of absorbing about 3.6 g or less of water per gram of superabsorbent polymer in about 15 seconds according to the FWA_{15sec} Test, and wherein when the coating of (b) is washed off, the superabsorbent polymer particulate of (a), the resulting superabsorbent polymer particulate has a water absorbent property of absorbing from about 5.7 grams to about 7.2 grams of water per gram of superabsorbent polymer in about 15 seconds according to the FWA_{15sec} Test.

Ganslaw *et al.* (U.S. 4,043,952), Mertens *et al.* (U.S. 6,620,889), Harada *et al.* (U.S. 5,115,011), Cook *et al.* (U.S. 6,562,743), Gartner *et al.* (WO 98/49221; U.S. 6,323,252), Inger *et al.* (U.S. 7,157,141), and Wilson (U.S. 6,579,958) have been cited during prosecution. These references relate to treatment of superabsorbent particles with metal salt (metal cation) for improving overall core permeability and for surface crosslinking. The references are deficient in that they do not teach or fairly suggest removal of the metal salt such that one having ordinary skill in the art would have found it obvious to make SAP having the claimed features.

The following references are also relevant:

Qin *et al.* (U.S. 2004/0214499) teaches spray application of a solution of Al₂(SO₄)₃ onto SAP particles; other polyvalent metal salts may be utilized.

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Dodge *et al.* (U.S. 6,696,618) teaches use of monovalent salts having different ionic strength to control absorbency of a superabsorbent material.

Smith *et al.* (U.S. 7,241,820) discloses a process for making superabsorbent particles using aluminum salts as crosslinking agent.

Weir *et al.* (U.S. 6,433,058) discloses treatment of SAP with a polyvalent metal salt such that the metal salt diffuses into the polymer resulting in a SAP having a absorption rate index of at least about 5 minutes.

Fujiura *et al.* (U.S. 5,002,986) discloses ionic surface crosslinking of SAP with a salt of a polyvalent metal in order to achieve rapid absorbency.

Johnson *et al.* (U.S. 5,684,106) teaches surface crosslinking of SAP particles with aluminum sulfate or sodium aluminate.

None of these references teaches the subject matter of the instant claims.

Any comments considered necessary by applicant must be submitted no later than the payment of the issue fee and, to avoid processing delays, should preferably accompany the issue fee. Such submissions should be clearly labeled "Comments on Statement of Reasons for Allowance."

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Any inquiry concerning this communication or earlier communications from the examiner should be directed to Rip A. Lee whose telephone number is (571)272-1104. The examiner can be reached on Monday through Friday from 9:00 AM - 5:00 PM. If attempts to reach the examiner by telephone are unsuccessful, the examiner's supervisor, David Wu, can be reached at (571)272-1114. The fax phone number for the organization where this application or proceeding is assigned is (571)273-8300.

Information regarding the status of an application may be obtained from the Patent Application Information Retrieval (PAIR) system. Status information for published applications may be obtained from either Private PAIR or Public PAIR. Status information for unpublished applications is available through Private PAIR only. For more information about the PAIR system, see <<http://pair-direct.uspto.gov>>. Should you have questions on the access to the Private PAIR system, contact the Electronic Business Center (EBC) at 866-217-9197 (toll free).

/Rip A. Lee/
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April 7, 2009